

[Global Histories]

A student journal

“And it is still not much different in Europe!” Understanding and Translating Anxiety: Homophile Emotional Ties Across the Atlantic 1950–1965

Author: Sébastien Tremblay

Stable URL: <http://www.globalhistories.com/index.php/GHSJ/article/view/36>

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/GHSJ.2015.36>

Source: Global Histories, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Dec. 2015), pp. 61–78

ISSN: 2366-780X

Copyright © 2015 Sébastien Tremblay



License URL: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Publisher information:

‘Global Histories: A Student Journal’ is an open-access bi-annual journal founded in 2015 by students of the M.A. program Global History at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. ‘Global Histories’ is published by an editorial board of Global History students in association with the Freie Universität Berlin.

Freie Universität Berlin
Global Histories: A Student Journal
Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut
Koserstraße 20
14195 Berlin

Contact information:

For more information, please consult our website www.globalhistories.com or contact the editor at: admin@globalhistories.com.

“And it is still not much different in Europe!”
Understanding and Translating Anxiety: Homophile
Emotional Ties Across the Atlantic 1950-1965

SÉBASTIEN TREMBLAY

Sébastien completed his BA in History and German Studies at the Université de Montréal in Canada and at the Freie Universität Berlin. He also spent a year abroad in Gießen, perfecting his languages skills and teaching French in a “Gesamtschule”. After years of focusing on Gender History and Queer History, he now researches the transnational links between Germany and the United States in the postwar era, with a focus on the history of masculinities, homosexualities and emotions. Parallel to his studies, he is interested in memory cultures in Germany, genocidal studies, memories of the Holocaust and European far-right movements. His Masters thesis explores the convergence of militarized masculinities and homosexualities in the early German Federal Republic.

Reacting to social and state repression in 50s and 60s US-America, homosexuals tried to redefine their masculinities through the homophile movement. Through the analysis of compiled letters sent by its readership to the biggest US-American homophile magazine of the time, ONE, this paper states that some homosexuals expressed anxiety when confronted with a contemporary crisis in masculinity, for which they were blamed. Crossing the Atlantic, ONE and its Swiss multilingual counterpart *Der Kreis/The Circle/Le Cercle* offered new perspectives for many gay men and lesbians, breaking their isolation and carrying out their desires. This paper confirms a sort of understanding in Switzerland of what was being felt by US-American homosexuals and demonstrates that a translation of those feelings was possible. Each magazine interpreted homosexual realities with different emotional and literary styles when it came to respectability, culture and legal affirmation. However both acted as a new form of communication networks for members of their communities.

Presented in the Panorama section of the 64th Berlinale in February 2014, the Swiss film *Der Kreis* retells the true story of Ernst Ostertag and drag superstar Röbi Rapp amidst the social circles of Zurich’s homophile movement in the first years of the 1940s. The story, told half in a traditional documentary fashion and half as a fiction, portrays Ernst as he goes to *Der Kreis* headquarters, a homophile magazine similar to another contemporary magazine in California: ONE. A discussion about the fate of the “US-American brothers” ensued where all protagonists expressed concern regarding the witch-hunt running amok during Senator Joseph McCarthy’s era in Washington.¹ Seen from a global perspective, what was happening in US-America – Cold War inquisitions against communism paralleled with an almost pathological fear of homosexuality – seemed anchored in local po-

¹ Stefan Haupt, “Der Kreis,” (Switzerland: 2014).

litical culture. Indeed, one Dutch reader of *ONE* sent a letter in 1953 to the magazine on the West Coast showing his empathy for discriminated homosexuals and stated that “in Holland there [were] no McCarthys, who see in every homophile a communist.”²

This scene is both intriguing and misleading. Although it is true that the post-war homophile movement had international ties and that some homosexuals expressed deep concern and empathy regarding what was happening across the Atlantic, it would be false to believe that every homosexual in Europe was interested or was standing in solidarity with their North American counterparts. However, global historians interested in the “navigation of feelings”, to borrow William Reddy’s 2001 book title, should look at the possibility offered them to inspect the level of understanding enabled by common bonds of oppression. If either the LGBT communities in California or Switzerland were oppressed under the yoke of sexual norms, the differing political and cultural contexts makes it hard for historians to parallel the emotional consequences and to develop an encompassing thesis. Nevertheless, the expression of feeling on both sides took similar proportions and analogous forms. *ONE: The Homosexual Magazine* from California and the multilingual Swiss *Der Kreis/The Circle/Le Cercle* offered new perspectives for many gay men and lesbians looking to break their isolation and carry out their desires without being ostracized. This paper will show that there was a sort of understanding in Switzerland of what was being felt by US-American homosexuals and that a translation of those feelings was possible. Both magazines interpreted homosexual realities with different emotional and literary styles when it came to respectability, culture and legal affirmation. However both acted as a new form of communication network for members of their communities. Indeed, an important place was accorded in each of them to the commentaries of eager readers and acted as a platform for social tirades, rebukes of the political *zeitgeist* or the expression of feelings. At the same time, the editors of both magazines received countless letters from subscribers articulating the various constellations of emotions experienced by their readership. According to Jan Plamper’s claim that private letters are a good source with which to analyze feelings,³ this paper will first examine an array of them, as they were sent to *ONE* in California, in order to emphasize a particular emotion that was evoked frequently by the magazine’s readers: anxiety. Establishing that the magazine acted as a new emotional geographical space, it is possible to implement this new emotional communication network on a global scale and study the flow of emotions crossing the Atlantic and transposed by different authors in its Swiss equivalent. A scan of *Der Kreis*’s literature written by its leading figure Karl Meier (known as Rolf) and his colleagues, will then allow

2 Craig M. Loftin, *Masked Voices: Gay Men and Lesbians in Cold War America*, Suny Series in Queer Politics and Cultures (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 67.

3 Jan Plamper, *Geschichte und Gefühl Grundlagen der Emotionsgeschichte* (München: Siedler, 2012), 44-47

us to see if US-anxiety was understood in Europe. So doing, theories on translation and hermeneutics, juxtaposed to the Swiss publication, will lead to a better depiction of this understanding.

My experience as both a self-identified North American young gay historian and LGBTQI activist on both continents necessarily figures in my interpretations of the aforementioned letters. Indeed, the classification of such letters by historian, teacher and gay man, Craig M. Loftin, inspired me to write this piece. Still, a continuous reflection of my position while analyzing the letters only pushed further the various possibilities and limitations of literary translation and interpretation. This is especially important as the core of the paper actually tries to demonstrate how identity can be somehow problematic and lead to a mirage of understanding.

One Magazine as an Emotional Exchange Space

Although not as prominent as the amount of papers and publications on McCarthyism and the Red Scare, the state of research on the “Lavender Scare”, the systemic discrimination, hunt and repression unleashed against people who did not fit into US-America’s Cold War sexual norms and morals, has evolved considerably during the last decade. Studied as an integral part of history on its own, the inquisition against homosexuals is now analyzed to grasp the causes of such a collective paranoia. From Richard Hofstadter’s studies on paranoia culture in the Cold War, to questionable conspiracy theories about a so-called “homosexual international”, the history of homophobic repression in the early Cold War era cannot be separated from an analysis of the history of sexuality and a social and cultural history of nationalist representation. Thanks to the historians of sexuality John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, it is now possible to study the sexual conceptions and assumptions of US-America’s sexuality in the 1950s up to the end of the 1960s. Moreover, the extensive archival research of young historians like Craig M. Loftin, and the engrossing studies on the persecution of gays and lesbians by historian David K. Johnson, put a term to propagandists’ euphemisms ignoring the LGBT community’s memory in mainstream publications on the Red Scare.⁴ Indeed, the Cold War *Newspeak* (borrowing the expression from Orwell’s dystopia) complicates the research on the subject due to the various amounts of idioms used as identifiers for non-heteronormative individuals. Such persons were often referred to as “moral weaklings”, “sexual misfits”, “moral risks”, “misfits”, “undesirables”, and “security risks” and were blended by many historians into

⁴ LGBT will be here preferred to LGBTQI, Queer theory and queer being a relatively new frame of analysis and a relatively new emancipator identifier. Furthermore, the small amount of research on Intersexuality in the Cold War era deprived the author of this paper the necessary documentation to make any statement on the subject. Needless to say that the academic world would benefit from a deeper historical investigation on this subject.

broader categories of people considered disloyal at the time.⁵ While other individuals, such as chronic gamblers and alcoholics, also fell into many of the same categories, recent archival examinations of the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the Central Intelligence Agency show that, most of the time, such categories were used as umbrella terms to repress and discriminate against gays, lesbians and trans* individuals.

Additionally, at the state and at the local level, citizens, media and law enforcement agencies started to push for better laws against what they considered “sexual psychopaths” and pushed for further action. In response to these calls, twenty-one states and the District of Columbia passed law against “sexual psychopaths” and child molesters between 1947 and 1955.⁶ Congressman Miller, one of the instigators of these laws in Nebraska, also started pushing for a subcommittee that would be charged to study the “homosexual case” in the State Department in order to stop perverts from “succumb[ing] to conflicting emotions to the detriment of the national security”. In his speech in Congress in 1950 he added that: “perhaps they [perverts] have relatives behind the iron curtain and thus would be subject to pressure [...] the most flagrant example is the homosexual who is subject to the most effective blackmail.”⁷

It is in this context, that discontented members of the Mattachine Society, the first homophile organization on the West Coast, created *One Magazine*, the first publication to actively promote homosexual viewpoints on the state of society. From 1953 onward, *ONE* published explicit rebukes of the repressive McCarthy era alongside short stories, erotica and news about the homophile state of affairs around the world. The latter, a collection of columns mingled together under the title “Tangents”, was the main international springboard connecting *ONE* with the rest of a global movement that will be analyzed in the next chapter. This part of the magazine accompanied in each issue by the letters written by various gays and lesbians around the country (and beyond the national borders) show how *ONE* and its readership mutually influenced one another. However, it is also utterly important to acknowledge that even if *ONE* politicized some of its readership, the magazine’s influence should not be overstated. According to Craig M. Loftin, the men and women reading and writing to the editors did not need to be introduced to a political impulse, but found nevertheless a way to articulate, clarify, and reinforce this impulse. Moreover many correspondents stated that they had

5 David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 7.

6 Fred Fejes, “Murder, Perversion, and Moral Panic: The 1954 Media Campaign against Miami’s Homosexuals and the Discourse of Civic Betterment,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 3 (2000), 318.

7 “Homosexuals in Government, 1950” *Congressional Record*, Volume 96 Part 4 81st Congress 2nd Session March 29 – April 24, accessed 29.03.2014, <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/gays-in-govt.html>.

already come to comfortable terms with their homosexuality before encountering the magazine.⁸

In that sense, *ONE* magazine and the organization behind it (ONE Inc.) not only acted as a movement, but also created a new space that permitted some gays and lesbians to find new areas in which to explore their emotions and express them, knowing that they would be shared by individuals likewise oppressed and concerned with similar issues. An anonymous letter from October 1956 summarizes this aspect: “*ONE* is more than a magazine to me. It’s a vehicle through which communion is made with thousands of brothers whose outlook, ideals, problems, etc. are my own. It is one of several important links with the world of our minority without which I would feel very parochial, not to say isolated.”⁹ This reader’s claim exemplifies the idea that *ONE* should be examined under the scope of emotional geography.¹⁰ The magazine had a clear editorial line, pushing forward the culture and appeals of the homophile movement. Nevertheless, various individuals belonging to various emotional styles could find common ground and participate in one persecuted emotional community.¹¹ This imagined gay and lesbian community could therefore enter the emotional geographical space offered by the magazine and interact with each other, and “use” the magazine to further certain emotional claims. At the same time they could consume the affective reactions caused by short stories or erotic photography. At this point it is also important to specify that some writers explicitly expressed their desire to be published and to express their thoughts and reactions in a national publication.¹² Furthermore, the strong and opinionated answers to articles and to other parts of the magazine clearly stipulated the aforementioned inter-relational aspect of the magazine. Some published letters had a clearly oppositional stance, refuting some editorial choices as well as other letters by fellow readers.¹³ Additionally, this emotional geographical aspect evolved around a time-line specific for this particular emotional community. For example, in concordance with the needs of the community, election times, a period characterized by a renewal of intensive persecutions, were equally intensely discussed inside *ONE* magazine’s borders.¹⁴ Thus, more than a magazine to be consumed, *ONE* was an emotional exchange space, influenced by and influencing gays and lesbians.

It is also possible to interpret the new emotional space as a part of a larger communication network; a circuit enabling communication between a source of in-

8 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 9.

9 *Ibid.*, 18.

10 Mick Smith et al., “Geography and Emotion: Emerging Constellations,” in *Emotion, Place, and Culture*, ed. Mick Smith et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 1-18.

11 Benno Gammerl, “Emotional Styles: Concepts and Challenges,” *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012), 163.

12 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 83.

13 Craig M. Loftin, “Unacceptable Mannerisms: Gender Anxieties, Homosexual Activism and Swish in the United States 1945-1965,” *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 3 (2007), 577-598.

14 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 85; for further information: Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*.

formation and the magazine's readership. According to historian Martin Meeker, this multi-directional circuit served as an inspiration to the surrounding emotional community. It ran from the readers to the publication and the other way around, helped to break down the walls isolating various individuals, and altered the process by which individuals could encounter ideas about identity and then articulate their own.¹⁵ Meeker also points out the link between identity formation and community building and the specificity of homosexual history. He writes that the identification process involves; "feeling, longing, sensing and thinking and not necessarily firsthand experience and experiential knowledge of a particular place or groups of people."¹⁶ Therefore, the desire to contact others via an amorphous geography, through a magazine, is a logical step in the affirmation of one's self. For that matter, Vivienne Cass' 1979 model of homosexual identity formation, borrowing a lot from the "coming-out" allegory, is useful to understand this logic. Cass' framework considers that identity formation is a developmental process. The first two steps of acceptance of one's non-heteronormative sexuality, "identity confusion" and "identity comparison", are pushed forward by establishing contacts with "others". Turning afterward a negative self-hatred to tolerance of oneself ("identity tolerance") the subject finally reaches the fourth stage, the one of acceptance ("identity acceptance").¹⁷

The textual aspect of this example of communication network and identity formation is also important in order to understand which kind of emotional space *ONE* could offer its readership. As Dariusz Galasinski mentions in his book *Men and the Language of Emotions*, textual communication provides three functions for emotional exchange: an ideational, an interpersonal, and a textual. Here the first two are of importance. Through their letters to the magazine and through the consumption of what *ONE* had to offer them, homosexuals could not only identify themselves to others, but also refer to realities they were keeping "inside" and express them on the "outside". By this they were exchanging and rendering intelligible their experience of the world.¹⁸ So far, if *ONE*'s readership was using the magazine as a new space to create and participate in exchanges on their emotional realities, it is necessary to take a look at the specificity of emotional expressions.

15 Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s - 1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 11.

16 Ibid., 10.

17 Darren Langdrige, "Are You Angry or Are You Heterosexual: A Queer Critique of Lesbian and Gay Models of Identity Development," in *Feeling Queer or Queer Feelings? Radical Approaches to Counseling Sex, Sexualities and Genders*, ed. Lindsay Moon (London: Routledge, 2008), 24-26.

18 Dariusz Galasinski, *Men and the Language of Emotions* (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 22.

Masks, Surveillance and Anxiety in Lavender America

It can easily be a cliché to consider the 1950s as an “age of anxiety”. Numerous scholars have already described the paranoia culture of the Cold War, the so-called crisis of masculinity or the postwar suburbanization culture.¹⁹ Yet, one could argue that “anxiety” could be a useful concept to understand gay men’s states of mind during the early years of the Cold War, as a mere suspicion of homosexuality could ruin their professional and love life, destroy their reputation, and alienate their family. Psychologist Evelyne Josse describes anxiety as: “a feeling of insecurity or of being threatened [and that] in contrast to fear, it can occur in the absence of any obvious danger or specific source of apprehension (context, place, person).” Furthermore, she advance that victims of anxiety:

[A]re constantly worried and experience excessive and recurrent fears relating, for instance, to their health or that of their families, or to their future or that of their children. They generally have feelings of impending doom. They often have a morbid awareness of their problem (they know that their apprehension is exaggerated or unfounded) but they nonetheless find it difficult if not impossible to overcome.²⁰

Homosexual historians working on homosexuality have argued that the well-known closet metaphor should be dismissed in order to introduce a mask metaphor already in use by people at the time.²¹ Wearing a mask conjures the idea of resistance and agency, whereas the closet metaphor evokes fear and some sort of passivity. Following this mask metaphor, gay men always had to “wear heterosexuality” at the office, at home, in the streets, if they wanted to avoid sexual repression. In effect, *ONE*’s cover of its 1955 issue “Are homosexuals necessarily neurotics?” extended the idea that a prolonged life of perpetual anxiety could lead to further emotional problems. The homosexual body, as the core of the social experience, was constantly under threat as both the workplace and the private sphere could trigger fears concerning one’s true sexuality.²² Indeed, *ONE*’s editor, Dorr Legg, mentioned during a lecture at the magazine’s institute that the trauma caused by the revelation of homosexual behaviors could leave a man completely shattered, because his carefully built-up world - his mask - was forcefully taken from him.²³ In a world where both conservatives and progressive forces were pub-

19 K. A. Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960,” *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (2000), 537.

20 Evelyn Josse, “They Came with Two Guns: The Consequences of Sexual Violence for the Mental Health of Women in Armed Conflicts,” in *International Review of the Red Cross* 92, no. 877 (2010), 9.

21 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 4.

22 David Bele and Gill Valentin, *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1995), 76.

23 Loftin, *Masked Voices: Gay Men and Lesbians in Cold War America*, 85.

licly humiliating homosexuals and where newspapers were divulging names of suspected ones, it is understandable that many gay men felt anxious, as their letters to the magazine stipulate.

Asked to retell her first experience with homosexual literature, lesbian mystery writer Katherin Forrest recalled that when she bought her first romance novel focusing on a same-sex relationship between two women, she felt her heartbeat through her chest crushed by a “gauntlet of fear” and remembers a “fear so intense that I remember nothing more” before exiting the store in a hurry in possession of the book. The fear of getting caught, prosecuted and losing control over one’s life marred the lives of numerous homosexuals at the time. This persistent fear or anxiety can also be traced in the communication network established by gay men via *ONE* magazine. Browsing through letters, historians shouldn’t be surprised to find expressions of anxiety around the same three spheres where the repression was at its highest: with one’s family, at one’s job and the constant fear of criminal prosecution. Historians and specialists of the period known as the Lavender Scare have already analyzed the impact of Cold War politics on false accusations of espionage, communism and treatise formulated against gay men working white-collar jobs.²⁴ Hence the high percentage of letters discussing job anxieties closely intertwined with a perpetual fear of criminal punishment.²⁵ Cynically, if the mere presence of the magazine in one’s apartment became both a possibility to drop the heterosexual mask and enter a communicative emotional space shared by other subscribers, it also became a source of anxiety, as a signifier of one’s deviance from the heteronormative ideal.²⁶ Moreover, men not performing their gender “correctly” constituted a cause of anxiety for other men and were sometimes repressed as the quest to attain hegemonic ideals of masculinity prevailed.²⁷ This was not only to repress gays but to avoid causing in others a state of anxiety crisis. In reaction, the US-American homophile movement started to witch-hunt its own members in order to force men to conform to masculine stereotypes. In his study of homophile correspondence Craig M. Loftin noted a vigorous and harsh debate between readers of *ONE*, as some wanted to appeal to masculine norms of respectability and conceal their love for their sexual comrades and others were strictly denigrating fellow homosexuals that weren’t consider manly enough. The latter despised the “fairy”, the “swish”, and the “queen” as shameful to the movement that tried to live in the shadow of the Lavender Scare.²⁸ In the play *Tea and Sympathy*, a fierce satire of the anti-communist inquisition and its effects on homosexuals, one character explains to the other, a “swish”, how to pass for heterosexual. The exaggerated aspect of the description for humoristic purposes

24 K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 17.

25 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 85.

26 Loftin, *Letters to One*, 101.

27 R.W Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).

28 Loftin, “Unacceptable Mannerisms”, 577-580.

still illustrates perfectly the heterosexual mask forced on gay men’s faces and the anxiety of the time:

First watch your hands... Avoid the limp wrist as you would the plague... Learn to control the little finger. The “fairy finger” I’ve heard it called. Brawny truck drivers can stop at their diners and while sipping coffee hoist their little finger to the ceiling - and get away with it. But you can’t Johnnie...[...] Crossing the legs is a universal posture of both sexes... The masculine way is to prop the ankle of one leg on the knee of the other; and to drop the elevated knee to such a level that the leg is almost parallel to the floor...²⁹

Moreover, various letters published by *ONE* or sent to the editors demonstrate the endless fear of many homosexuals when it came to the consumption of same-sex desires. Those letters embodied what Foucault calls the “cycle de l’interdit” and exemplify the power of auto discipline and alienation when it comes to the repression of sexuality and affirmation of one’s power over another. By constantly remembering that he shouldn’t touch, approach, consume, desire, talk about, or appear as a form of transgression of the sexual norm, a gay man almost forgets to exist and perform his sexuality outside of secret circles.³⁰ Foucault argues that power only has one option against a deviant form of sexuality: a pernicious one. Thus, opting for auto regulation, as punishment hangs over him like the sword of Damocles, the homosexual man renounces his sexuality to appease his anxiety. However, historians shouldn’t see this process as a form of shame, as transgression still took place in the emotional space covered by the magazine. Instead of looking at these letters as a testimony of passive anxiety, scholars should look at them as a form of emotional agency where homosexuals realized that something was wrong. As Foucault also stated in his work on the history of sexuality, the recognition of one’s own oppression is a major step toward pride.³¹ The model exposed previously elaborated by Cass asserts the same notion of reality check.

Unfortunately, the concealment of homosexual sexuality also deprived countless young men of information about their own sexuality. If many letters expressed homosexuals’ anxiety toward losing their jobs and the idea of facing the state judicial apparatus, some other letters expressed young men’s anxious feelings about their own desires, their own bodies. Neil, a young man from suburban Oakland, stumbling upon an issue of *ONE* looked for answers to diverse questions about his sexuality. Anxious about the idea of “anal copulation”, Neil asked how he could manage to consume his desires for men around him without having to participate

29 Ibid., 584.

30 Michel Foucault, *Histoire De La Sexualité I: La Volonté Du Savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 110-111.

31 Ibid., 100.

in such acts he couldn't cope with.³² In the same vein, John expressed his despair every time he was going to shower at work, as he was aroused by some of his colleagues' muscles and attributes. John was not only anxious about his own sexuality and bodily manifestations of his own desire (erections), but also feared to be discovered by his co-workers and friends and to lose both his job and probably his family.³³ Consequently, if such letters reached the editors' desk and went on to be published, the communication network offered by *ONE* did not only allow a new geographical space to discuss a common anxiety, but also proved to offer a pedagogical space where others could answer questions.³⁴

Still, the emotional space created by *ONE* magazine only existed in the context of a broader society that decided to put an end to the destruction of US-values. In the context of the Cold War and persistent paranoia culture forwarded by McCarthyism this took the form of espionage, censorship and surveillance. Accordingly, historians should remember that many homosexuals were aware, at least the editors of the magazine, that every issue was being scrutinized by censors and by the FBI. Fugaté, the first member of *ONE* to put voluntarily his face in a gay national publication, dismissed his associates' fear before the publication by saying:

Do you honestly believe the FBI hasn't secured every name and address by the simple means of photographing one of your monthly mailings when you brought it into the Post office? Or are you naive enough to suppose that there isn't a fat file on each of you (and me) and your activities in spite of your pseudonyms? Remember we do live in a Police State.³⁵

According to Fugaté's declaration, it should be noted that letters published by *ONE* or even the letters sent to the editors with explicit plea not to be published probably already suffered from auto-censorship. Appropriately, those letters should not be considered the perfect expression of experienced emotions, of experienced anxiety. Contrary to numerous European homophile magazines providing its subscribers with a possibility to create links between pen pals, *ONE*'s board never deemed the situation safe enough.³⁶ Surveillance is best expressed by another John, who lost his job after writing a letter to *ONE*. Amidst various accusations of obscenity, it is almost normal that he suspected some kind of shadowing. He wrote in 1959:

I am led to the belief that you never received either of my two letters. This implies that the post office opened them and read them (information which was never in-

32 Loftin, *Letters to One*, 82.

33 *Ibid.*, 131.

34 *Ibid.*, 140-141.

35 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 29.

36 *Ibid.*, 70.

tended for their eyes) and then refused to deliver them to you. There was absolutely nothing in either letter...which was the less (sic) bit obscene or in any way unmailable. I know the trouble you've had and that a bunch at the Los Angeles post office ought to be ousted from their jobs and the whole rotten lot of them thrown in prison and the keys thrown away. But there's nothing I can do about it except tell you about it. That is, if this letter ever gets to you. Now, on those first two letters I did not put my return address on the outside. On this one I am. This may make a difference. If you receive this letter, I trust you will make a prompt reply via the enclosed envelope...³⁷

Indeed, since the early 1870s, post office censorship had been a reality to cope with. At the time, Anthony Comstock, a leader in the YMCA movement had been pushing for new draconian measures to ban erotica and material he deemed obscene, especially anything sexually explicit. With the YMCA at his side, and surfing on the success of previous anti-obscenity statutes, Comstock started a federal campaign. He helped to pass the 1873 bill calling for the “Suppression or Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use” through the mail, then known as the Comstock Act. The new bill procured extra powers to the postmaster general, enabling him to seize material being sent through the mail.³⁸ In a time where mail was one of the only ways to secure subscribers to their monthly issues, the Comstock Act became, decades later, another obstacle to the homophile movement, and most particularly its international ties. Indeed, magazines crossing the northern border to Canada or sent to Europe added another layer of insecurity to foreign homophiles and adherents. Writing to the editors from Hamilton, Ontario on the 22nd of May 1958, Steven, a subscriber, expressed his problems with the Canadian authorities after the US-post office marked his correspondence as being forbidden and inappropriate³⁹. In the same vein, *ONE Inc.* had to go to court (and eventually won) after one of its issues was called out as obscene for advertising *Der Kreis* on its back cover.⁴⁰ However, the post office laws did not only have repercussions for international mail. For example, Fernando, a New-Yorker writing on the 31st of July 1960 expressed his concerns on a “wave of decency” making his life miserable and causing him anguish. He stipulated that his trust in the post office had been lost for years and that he felt there was constant examination of his mail.⁴¹

As it has been so far demonstrated, the life of many homosexuals seems to have been marked by anxiety even though they were able to express it to their peers

37 Ibid, 102-103.

38 Meeker, *Contacts Desired Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s*, 19.

39 Loftin, *Letters to One: Gay and Lesbian Voices from the 1950s and 1960s*, 123.

40 Ibid, 9.

41 Ibid, 48.

and to a newly formed communication network, using *ONE* as an emotional geographical space. On the other hand, historians of emotions should not forget that anxiety is not necessarily a merely negative feeling. In his philosophical work on anxiety, Kierkegaard points out that anxiety can also be a spark, a push to new manifestations of freewill, of adaptation to crisis.⁴² By exchanging on their anxieties, homosexuals could then find a sense of pride in what they accomplished. Martin Block, the first editor of *ONE*, stated that one of the magazine's goals was to give the opportunity to fellow homosexuals to look at themselves in the mirror and be proud for the first time of what they were.⁴³ The tone of many letters published in the magazine's history was not one of utter despair but of resilience to external forces, a sort of get-together of everyone's anxiety in order to find new strategies to overcome the numerous difficulties of being gay at the time. A letter published on the 3rd March 1963, written by a young man named Trent, illustrates this side of the story. It is unclear if Trent meant the editors or the readership he refers to in his letter, but he wrote (as many others have done): "You, have given me courage and strength over the years far more than you can ever know." He then goes on expressing his concerns and numerous anxious aspects of his life as a non-heteronormative man in Cold War America.⁴⁴

Post-war sexuality expert, Dagmar Herzog, claimed that historians too often forget that the 1950s was also a period of sexual contestation.⁴⁵ Additionally, Meeker has already shown in his work on communication networks that homophile activists paved new pathways of interaction between homosexuals and pursued them over decades. In so doing, they helped to break the isolation of many and expand the homosexual world⁴⁶. However, if this resistance and sharing of each other's emotions helped some homosexuals to overcome their anxiety, or to at least express it, how can translation theory help historians to analyze if Meeker's communication networks really worked on the international level? The homophile movement did have global ties, especially in the Western World, but how did cross-linguistic and cultural contexts affect the readings of the aforementioned US-American anxieties?

42 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 10.

43 Eric Marcus, *Making History the Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990; an Oral History* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1992), 41.

44 Loftin, *Letters to One*, 18.

45 Jennifer V. Evans, "The Long 1950s as Radicals in-Between: The Photography of Herbert Tobias," in *Queer 1950s: Rethinking Sexuality in the Postwar Years*, ed. Heike Bauer and Matt Cook (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 14.

46 Meeker, *Contacts Desired Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s*, 35.

A Circle of Translation: Der Kreis and its understanding of US-Anxiety

In every issue of *ONE*, one section, “Tangents”, was reserved for international news about worldwide homophile topics, or merely short stories including travel diaries and personal fantasies. While its flirtation with Orientalism should not be ignored, these monthly columns provided subscribers with an open door to numerous other communication networks. Amidst many ties to other magazines, the ties with *Der Kreis* from Zurich remained of utter importance, as they were one of the biggest and oldest magazines. It was common matter for authors of *Der Kreis* to travel to the USA and share their experiences in the English section of the trilingual periodical. In the same vein, Rolf (Karl Meier) traveled to California to visit *ONE*’s editors and stayed at various collaborators’ apartments.⁴⁷ He even sent a number of thank you notes and gave a speech about *ONE* at the next ball organized by *Der Kreis* in Zurich. Similarly, *ONE*’s editors organized a travel week in Europe for young homophiles in the beginning of the 1960s. Meier took the participants to the Alps and celebrated with them the worldwide connections of the homophile movement.⁴⁸ Additionally, the English authors collaborating with *Der Kreis*, nearly all originating from the United States, went to great lengths to describe the North-American situation to Swiss subscribers. For example, the leading figure of the Anglophone section of the magazine, Rudolf Jung, recalled in various issues and his private correspondence the good souvenirs he had from his time in New York City. *ONE*’s editors showed him the metropolis’ marvels from the top of the Empire State Building in 1958, leaving a strong impression on him.⁴⁹

The emotional situation and political context in the United States preoccupied the readership of *Der Kreis* as the magazine kept on delivering, similarly to the “tangent” section in *ONE*, a summary of the political situation across the globe. The situation in US-America was entitled to two special issues in the 1950s alone. The Anglophone section of the magazine was especially fond of Richard Plant’s (formerly Plaut) stories. Growing up in Frankfurt am Main, Plant moved back to Basel after twenty years in the USA. In his short descriptions of American lives, Plant tried to mark the differences between the Europeans and their counterparts across the Atlantic. His writing focusing on homosexual life in the Big Apple or in Massachusetts portrays US-citizens as more inhibited than the Europeans thought they were. He stated that especially after the McCarthy witch-hunt, homosexuals in the North American Republic had learnt to cover their tracks and pursue “normal” lives.⁵⁰ The time away from North America may have blurred Plant’s vision

47 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 72.

48 Ibid.

49 Hubert Kennedy, “The Ideal Gay Man: The Story of Der Kreis,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 38, no. 12 (1999), 38

50 Ibid., 39.

of his past homophile ties in the United States, as the letters sent to *ONE* and the articles published in the *Californian* monthly described a time of great upheavals in the US-homophile movement. While the movement in California denounced their position as scapegoats for many Cold War deceits and faced the consequences for this, the Swiss faction focused much more on respectability and avoiding making waves, even to the extent of avoiding contesting the law at all. Indeed, Meier was always proud to discard other magazines, like the Danish *Vennen*, as “enfants terribles”. He also pointed out that *Der Kreis* was included in Bern’s National Library catalogue and *de facto* had no problem with the authorities.⁵¹

This association with the establishment should not be considered as a proof that Swiss homosexuals did not feel anxiety. According, for example, to one post from Meier in July 1960, his subscribers appeared to have problems writing about the positive aspects of living a homosexual life. Commenting on the entries to the second short story contest organized by *Der Kreis* and urging more would-be writers to use their plumes, Meier expressed his concerns about the dramatic aspects of each received story. Unease at the amount of stories evolving around fear, he appealed for more contributions regarding “that cheerful-considered element that does not burden our being and being ‘so’ with such weight.”⁵² It is probably impossible to know exactly why subscribers were more focused on the negative aspects of homosexual lives, but the lives of homosexuals in Switzerland and in Europe in general was not an easy ride. From the West-German §175 criminalizing sexual intercourses deemed “against nature”, to police raids across the continent, the situation was similar across the continent. Actually, Meier himself commented in July 1964 on the situation in the USA and compared it to what was going on in Switzerland and in Europe. He stated:

the McCarthy process in America seems to have more or less run into the sand. Or better said: there is no end to it, for even if the American public has had more than enough of the painful play of tricks that the world has been offered by it, there will follow numerous smaller processes for “false accusations and perjury” here and there. And it is still not much different in Europe! Confiscation of books that treat our theme, confiscation of pictures that glorify beautiful young men, without being immoral, not to mention obscene, attempts to destroy serious periodicals even when they are directed only to those with the same feelings all this we also know in Switzerland in spite of the law that allows adults the freedom of erotic relationships.⁵³

To what extent did Meier understand the reality of McCarthyism when he wrote those words? The world homophile movement, in an American or Swiss context, faced similar oppressions and repression. Nevertheless, they also differed, espe-

51 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 71.

52 Kennedy, “The Ideal Gay Man: The Story of *Der Kreis*,” 59.

53 *Ibid*, 94.

cially in their respective contexts. Despite this, they were two different emotional spaces and two communication networks merging together on a global scale. Stephan Fuchs, professor of sociology at the University of Virginia wrote in his 2001 book *Against Essentialism: A Theory of Culture and Society* that when two cultures interact and overlap up to a certain important degree, numerous problems encountered in the process of translation merge and divergences become less severe.⁵⁴ So how could homophiles from Switzerland read Richard Plant’s short stories and Meier’s comments on McCarthyism and understand the anxiety felt by *ONE*’s subscribers? According to Fuchs, two similar Western cultures, such as the Swiss and the US-American, should find a path to understanding each others’ feelings. What could be considered similar and what could not when it comes to the homophile movement?

Before carrying on with further analysis, the issue of language remains. In their introduction to their volume *Emotions in Crosslinguistic Perspective*, Jean Harkins and Anna Wierzbicka argue against the notion that emotions are universal and exist in fixed linguistic forms. Calling out on the ethnocentricity of such a claim, they demonstrate how words like “fear” and “anger” in English could have no equivalent in other languages.⁵⁵ Galasinski, in his aforementioned study on men and emotions, also criticized the same notion, adding that emotional words could have multiple forms in different languages. For him the word “fear” could be understood differently in Polish, as the concept could be interpreted as: *starch*, *lek* or *obawa*.⁵⁶ As a result, the trilingual aspect of *Der Kreis* is interesting, as the English speaking part of the magazine was the one dealing the most with the situation in US-America. Nevertheless, the readership was not only constituted of English native speakers and, as it was previously stated, some issues over the years were dedicated specially to the problem on the other side of the Ocean and therefore in German and in French as well as English. Moreover, the communication network of *Der Kreis*, allowing exchange in three languages about various subjects, complicated the matter, as the communication was already being translated from one language to another. Furthermore, the issue of language can only be considered the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding. Even if speaking the same language, two homosexuals, already being different people, can associate different ideas with exactly the same word in the same context. Even in an emotional space outside of hegemonic masculinity, the plurality of homosexual contexts can easily lead to two different readings of the word “anxiety”, even if the two were born and raised in the same city, are of the same age and speak the same language.

54 Stephan Fuchs, *Against Essentialism: A Theory of Culture and Society* (Harvard University Press, 2001), 81.

55 Jean Harkins and Anna Wierzbicka, *Emotions in Crosslinguistic Perspective* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 5.

56 Galasinski, *Men and the Language of Emotions*, 4.

On the other hand, for Gadamer, understanding - being always contextual - is only possible through hermeneutics as everyone is construed by “prejudices”. Yet sustained dialogue between two cultures, even if they are alien to each other, permits a “merging of horizons”. Indeed, for Gadamer, when two cultures are part of the same *Wirkungsgeschichte*, as it could be argued for the Swiss and US-American homophile culture in the 1950s and 1960s, the hermeneutical circle of translation can become productive, as understanding and the lack of it is exchanged back and forth by protagonists of the same story.⁵⁷ In other words, by reading in similar ways letters and short stories about each other and exchanging their feelings about comparable oppressions, Swiss and US-American homophiles could move toward better understanding. Stephen Fuchs advances that the process proposed by Gadamer is a never-ending one. Thus there is no “one accurate understanding”, but understanding becomes possible.

However, sociologist Martin Fuchs, in his writing on representation and translation, disagrees with Gadamer as the gap between contextual experiences and the reading of such experiences is too wide to be overcome. For Fuchs even if reflections on translation have evolved over the years, the ability to understand the translation of someone’s own translation of the world around them seems impossible.⁵⁸ Yet, William Reddy, in his book *The Navigation of Feelings* argues that ‘translation’ is a good replacement for the post-structuralist concept of sign, to rise above the signifier/signified dichotomy. Reddy uses the example of (the image) of a circle [item 1] and the words “a drawn circle” [item 2]. Both items are expressions of a similar concept: the circle. Instead of arguing that one item is the signified and the other is merely a signification of the original one, or the signifier, Reddy advances that both are a translation of the same idea.⁵⁹ For him, the connection between both items seems to lay somehow at the juncture point, in their resemblance. In the same vein, Ricoeur writes that even in misunderstandings the idea is supported by a prior concept of meta-level understanding.⁶⁰

Even if one agrees with Martin Fuchs when it comes to analysis of emotional contexts and the experience behind them, Ricoeur’s and Reddy’s ideas on translation can help the historian to understand how homophiles could meet each other halfway on the path to understanding. In other words, instead of focusing on differences, historians of emotions should focus on similarities. Communicating through plural forms, homosexuals in Switzerland and in the United States expressed concerns about what was going on in the rest of the world and how their counterparts across the Atlantic were experiencing repression. Ironically, the op-

57 Stephan Fuchs, *Against Essentialism*, 82.

58 Martin Fuchs, “Reaching out; or, Nobody Exists in One Context Only: Society as Translation,” *Translation Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009), 21-40.

59 William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling a Framework for the History of Emotions*, (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2001), 79-80.

60 John B. Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics a Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), 77.

pression afflicting homosexuals in Europe and North America, if different in its contexts and outline, may have been the door to an understanding of the fear or anxiety expressed on both sides. Swiss homosexuals could read stories and travel diaries about anxious homosexuals in California or New York City and transpose their own feelings of fear into them. By translating their emotions via those expressed by others, they already understood them. This is not to say that the US-American signified anxiety was understood completely, but it would confirm Gadamer’s never ending fusion of horizons.⁶¹

Conclusion

From California to Zurich, the postwar years were harsh for homosexuals. However, the Queer 1950s and 60s of Heike Bauer and Matt Cook are both the decades of aspiration to struggle and internalised anxieties.⁶² In that sense, Gadamer’s never ending fusion of horizons is a never ending story of exchange that eventually led to a more global movement. That being said, homosexuals of the time, almost whispering the word, could not have foreseen the mass communication of today’s transnational movements.⁶³ In the same way, global exchanges of overseas experiences and struggles did not mean back then, as it does today, that homosexuals from both side of the Atlantic could grasp an exact understanding of each other’s fears and anxieties. This paper intended to demonstrate that there is no incommensurability in understanding and that if historians would not focus only on differences it would be possible to accept that one interpretation of a given emotion, here anxiety, can be perceived as a partial understanding. Translation of feelings, even if they lead to misunderstandings, are still set in an exchanging process between two, and indeed a plurality of, actors.

For that reason, it is possible to recognize that subscribers and editors of *Der Kreis* could have understood anxiety expressed by *ONE*’s readership. If one sees either magazine as a communication network it is tempting to merge them into one big emotional homophile exchange space that pushed solidarity. Historians, always critical of their sources, know that such an immense claim for international solidarity, if not whimsical, would be at least an oversimplification, as both magazines were implemented in their own culture and contexts, distinct from one another. This is exactly where global historians and global historians of emotions can observe how both fields of studies can learn from each other. Historians of

61 Ibid, 75.

62 V. Evans, “The Long 1950s as Radicals in-Between: The Photography of Herbert Tobias,” in *Queer 1950s: Rethinking Sexuality in the Postwar Years*, ed. Heike Bauer and Matt Cook (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 1-12.

63 Joe Binnie and Christian Klesse, “Researching Transnational Activism around Lgbtq Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Activist Solidarities and Spatial Imaginings,” in *De-Centering Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*, ed. Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielińska (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 107-129.

emotions and sociologists like Martin Fuchs, suspicious of universal claims to total understanding, may temper the enthusiasm of the latter who would recall that Global History is not a synonym for a total history of a global world. Indeed, if both magazines, and both emotional spaces, had differences, they also shared ties. Editors from both publications shared friendships as both readers and writers exchanged on personal situations. The anxieties in the USA to lose one's job, to be under constant surveillance by the post office or to be discovered as a homosexual could have been recalled by Swiss subscribers and editors as they were facing a similar oppression based on sexual norms in Europe. Gay activists in the United States and in Switzerland did not invent homosexual activism, they adapted a form of resistance that existed on the international level and gave it a written form. That two magazines were founded so far apart also depicts the possibility that such oppression, though different in its form, could lead to a similar reaction. That being said, there is then a possibility of understanding a trail of anxiety: from the pen of a young man in Kansas expressing his anxiety to *ONE*'s editors, across the Atlantic to the discussion of two homosexuals in Zurich reading about it.